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ABSTRACT

Loss and uprootedness are core problems of enforced separation, and are especially hard on children. Children in out-of-home care need help in dealing with separation, particularly in maintaining ties with family. This report details a study of how 36 social workers in 2 Canadian child protection agencies have managed separation issues with the children in their caseload. The study examined children's behavior and expressed feelings related to separation from their families, as well as the responses of their caseworkers, foster caregivers, and placement agencies. Following an introduction noting the importance of maintaining family ties and detailing the study setting, the report's first chapter presents theories of separation and self-concept relevant to children in care. Chapter 2 reviews research knowledge from empirical studies and practice experience. Chapters 3-5 describe and discuss the qualitative findings from workers' discussions in supervision, including children's reactions to separation; workers' interventions; and agency influences on the handling of separation, all of which indicate that children in care have strong emotional ties to their families, but that these often go unrecognized, while families tend to be excluded from their children's lives in care. The report's final chapter draws conclusions from the findings and makes recommendations to address the gaps between principles and practice in child welfare service delivery. Four appendices provide details of the format and content of an in-service training program on separation and inclusive practice that was given to the social workers at the beginning of the study. (HTH)

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